Final Evaluation Report on the HELENA MODEL CITY PROGRAM

September 1976

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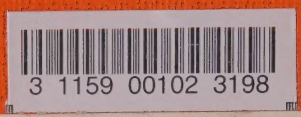

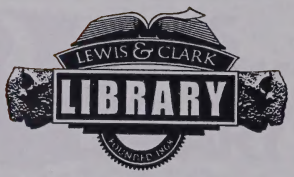

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

ON THE

HELENA

MODEL CITY PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER, 1976

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FINAL LOCAL EVALUATION REPORT - CITY OF HELENA MODEL CITIES PROGRAM

April 1, 1969 through September 30, 1976

Model Cities - The Actual Cost:

Over the five years of its operation $6.3 million dollars was spent in Helena, Montana, as part of the Model Cities Program. A breakdown of those expenditures into categories demonstrates the priorities that were set according to percentage of funds that were spent in each area:

Physical Development	38%
Social Services	29%
Administration & Evaluation	15%
Economic Development	13%
Citizen Participation	5%

It would not be fair to evaluate the success of the Model Cities projects solely on the basis of the amount of money that was spent in any particular category; however, within the program areas, economic, physical and social development, it would be accurate to say that the amount of money spent in each of these categories was truly reflective of the emphasis that the Model Cities process placed on each of these areas of local concern.

Administrative and evaluation costs were higher in the Model Cities than in any of the City's other budgeted activities. This was true because of the emphasis placed on doing new and different things in the Model Cities program, the number of independent (i.e. non-city) agencies administering Model City contracts, and the requirement to evaluate the success or failure of those activities as an ongoing part of the program's administration. Prior to Model Cities, citizen participation as a budgeted expenditure was unheard of. In Model Cities the large amount of money spent on citizen

participation was viewed as an investment in creating a decision-making process that would involve a wide spectrum of interests in the City of Helena with a particular emphasis on the participation of low and moderate income residents.

At the time of the inception of the Model Cities it was the only federal program that allowed federal dollars to be designated as "local" dollars and used to match other federal funds. Helena was very successful in leveraging Model Cities funds -- for every dollar of Model Cities funds, we received five dollars from other, primarily federal, sources. Overall we received a total of $20.7 million in federal grants that were used in Model Cities projects. This successful precedent has now been incorporated into both the Community Development and most recently the General Revenue Sharing Program.

PART I - ECONOMIC PROBLEMS/DEVELOPMENT

The amount of money allocated to coping with the City of Helena's economic problems (13% of total money spent in the Model Cities Program) is reflective of the emphasis that citizens groups in the City placed on economic activities as part of the City's governmental process. It would be inaccurate to suggest that economic problems were not and will not continue to be a problem in the City of Helena, but in terms of allocation of resources available under the Model Cities program, for the most part, the citizen groups and the City itself viewed economic development as a role that was outside of the general responsibilities of city government. ~~and~~ Unlike social services, little effort was made to expand the City's role in the economic development area. This is primarily true because the City of Helena has an extremely stable economic climate, large unaffected by the economic ups and downs of the economy as a whole. The City of Helena is the capitol city, the seat of state government, and almost the total economy is dependent directly or indirectly upon state government employment. The City of Helena has the highest per capita and the highest family income of any city in Montana. Currently the median family income in the City of Helena is approximately $13,000 and throughout the five years of Model Cities increases in the median family income has kept pace with inflation.

Through the process of the Model Cities administration careful emphasis was placed on providing jobs to Model City area residents and improving the economic conditions of Model City neighborhoods was identified as an overall goal. When it came to prioritizing specific projects, however,

rarely were economic activities viewed as a significant way in which to help low or moderate income people. In fact, the economic development projects can be divided into two types of category. The first is manpower and employment programs that were funded under Model Cities. These projects involved the organization and initial start-up funding for Helena Industries, a sheltered workshop which employed emotionally and physically handicapped persons, and youth employment and an urban beautification employment projects, both designed to help low and moderate income youth. Although these projects have been listed under the economic category they can best be evaluated as a part of the emphasis which the City of Helena's Model Cities Program placed on solving social rather than economic problems.

The second category of funds is directly concerned with developing Helena's economy. Two-thirds of the money spent in this category was spent on a single project, the "seed money" to begin the Model Cities Development Corporation which was and continues to be a non-profit corporation designed to help marginal businesses. Over $200,000 has been spent helping numerous small businesses get started often in conjunction with an SBA loan. The largest portion of the money allocated to the Model Cities Development Corporation, $303,000, was spent on one project, a construction loan to build a condiminium office and shopping complex in the Last Chance Urban Renewal project area. The major portion of Model Cities funds devoted to economic development were in fact used to leverage investment in the Last Chance Urban Renewal project area and therefore bolstered the physical development activities of the Model Cities Program.

Perhaps the major reason why more funds were not allocated to economic development type activities is that the City of Helena business community (Chamber of Commerce, lending institutions, and others who would make up the economic power base of the City) never perceived the Model Cities Program as an activity in which they should or could successfully participate. The citizen participation process was something that the Helena business community never became involved with and consequently their interests and concerns were never represented in the Model Cities citizen review process.

Today, however, the business community has taken a more active interest in a possible City participation in economic activities. The City has also taken a more direct role in economic development but not with Model City funding. The City is responsible for the construction and in the operation of a "Cow Port", a livestock export center, and the construction of an industrial park. Model Cities funds were spent on an economic base study which has been used as the basis for the development of these other City projects.

PART II. PHYSICAL PROBLEMS/DEVELOPMENT

The City of Helena's most successful and most controversial Model Cities project was the one million dollars that was contributed to help provide the City's share of the cost of the Last Chance Urban Renewal Project. Urban Renewal and Model Cities came to Helena almost simultaneously and through the years of their existence have been consistently interchangeable in the minds of the citizenry of Helena. When the City of Helena accepted the urban renewal grant it was understood that one-quarter of the cost of the total project had to be financed either with in-kind contributions or actual cash contributions on the part of the city government. The one million dollars in Model Cities funds made it feasible for the City of Helena to undertake the downtown urban renewal of Helena.

Urban Renewal, as a Model Cities project, was not selected as a result of the prioritizing of needs through the citizen participation process. For the most part it can be said that this was not a popular project with the Model Cities neighborhood councils, although the councils did ultimately each year recommend it for funding. One important result of having urban renewal as a Model Cities project was the focus of attention that was given urban renewal as a part of the overall citizen participation and evaluation process. Urban Renewal was reviewed not only by residents and property owners in the urban renewal project area as is typically the case, but because it was a Model Cities project, by the citizenry of the City of Helena as a whole. The Last Chance Urban Renewal project will also be completed within a five year period of time and is scheduled for close-out

December 31, 1976. Almost all of the land in the urban renewal project area has been sold, old buildings are in the process of being rehabilitated, and the major ongoing activity that the City of Helena will still have as a responsibility after Urban Renewal close-out will be the historic preservation activities within the area that are being continued with the help of Community Development funds. The one million dollars that was spent on urban renewal as a Model Cities project is twice the amount spent on any other single Model City activity. It is interesting to note that the second largest funding for any single Model Cities project was the half million dollars that was given to the Model Cities Development Corporation which of course indirectly bolstered the Last Chance Urban Renewal Project.

The next major emphasis on physical development type activities came in the recreational area where more than $800,000 was spent primarily on parks development. This was in fact the result of citizens effort and citizen perception that recreational activities in the City of Helena had received an inordinately low priority and that greater emphasis should be placed by the City on recreational type activities. It was determined through the citizen review process that over a period of many years the City had discouraged park development because of the ongoing maintenance and upkeep costs. As a result of Model Cities three new parks were created and four existing parks were improved. The three new parks are located in low income areas that previously had not had any park facilities.

Because of the increased emphasis placed on parks and recreation development, staffing was provided as a Model Cities project to hire a joint School District and the City of Helena recreation director. This has improved

coordination and use of public and school recreational facilities and is now an ongoing permanent part of the City of Helena and the School District budgets. Just this year the City/School District recreation director's position has been expanded to include the administration of all parks and recreation activities. One way of solving the ongoing maintenance responsibilities that result from park development has been to use a cooperative program with the School District whereby the City of Helena pays for the initial development and construction of the parks and thereafter the School District maintains them when they are built in conjunction with a City school.

A third category of physical development activities which will have an ongoing and lasting effect on the City of Helena concerns the solid waste disposal project to help develop the City of Helena landfill. It is located close to the center of town and had previously been a blight on the landscape and an unsafe area where transitents tended to congregate because it was located near the railroad tracks. The early days of Model Cities coincided with the growing emphasis on environmental protection and effective solid waste management. It was indeed viewed as an innovative project to locate a landfill in a heavily populated area, and the landfill is now part of the City's governmental structure. Part of the area has been reclaimed and put into service as park land for horse-shoe pits and baseball diamonds and a new YMCA has been built just adjacent to the landfill area. Plans are now underway to continue the landfill operation on non-City owned land adjacent to our existing landfill that will be leased by the City of Helena and reclaimed for the Burlington Northern Railroad.

The fourth and final area of lasting impact of Model Cities physical development activities concerns sewer and water improvements. These were viewed by the City of Helena as critical and the needed capital improvements, once explained in terms of solving water and sewer problems that has plagued the City for years, were fully supported in the citizen review process.

Only $69,000 or 1% of the total Model Cities funds available was actually spent on developing housing, even though it was consistently identified through all the years of the Model Cities process as the City's most critical need. This was true not because there was an unwillingness to spend money on housing projects but because Model Cities did not generate innovative ways in which Model Cities funding could be used to leverage housing development. Just as in the Community Development Program, Model Cities funds could not be spent directly on the construction of housing. The money in fact was spent in housing study (the result of which was to point out the critical housing shortage in the City of Helena) and to improve the quality of construction of public housing projects in Helena by adding certain amenities for the elderly and improving landscaping on the scattered family sites. Funds were also used to develop a code enforcement program by hiring a building official to coordinate all enforcement efforts. The project was not successful because code enforcement did not have the support of the city administration or the citizens themselves because when violations of the City codes were found they were typically found in residences belonging to low and moderate income people who could not afford to make the necessary improvements. Under Community Development a well funded Rehab Loan and Grant program which has been made available on a voluntary basis has proved highly successful.

PART III. SOCIAL PROBLEMS/DEVELOPMENT

The most significant impact that Model Cities made in Helena came as a result of the City's involvement for the first time in financing social service activities. With minor exceptions (youth recreation projects and burglary prevention) they were not administered by the City but subcontracted to other operating agencies. A total of 26 projects in the areas of social services, education, health, and crime prevention were subcontracted to nine different agencies, thus setting a precedent for City involvement in social service type activities and as a "grant giving" agency.

In terms of the long range impact of Model Cities involvement in social services, the thing that can be most readily identified is the continued community interest in providing a wide variety of social services to the residents of the Helena area. There is, however, such a wide proliferation of social service agencies that it is impossible to identify an agency or level of government that is recognized as the prime provider of such services. Only limited results have been realized by attempts to coordinate efforts among social service agencies. Little has been done to unify services, facilitate referrals and prevent duplication. The construction of the Neighborhood Center, partially funded through Model Cities, to provide a "home" for social service agencies has helped by centralizing some of the City's social service agencies.

Traditionally, Helena's social services have been limited to those provided through the County's Social and Rehabilitation Services (welfare) Department. With the growth of the great society programs in the mid-60's

Helena joined a tri-county Community Action Program run by a non-profit corporation, the Rocky Mountain Development Council (RMDC). Several of the Model Cities social services projects were handled through sub-contracts with RMDC and Model Cities money was used to provide local matching funds. Since the projects funded were typical of CAP agency activities funded throughout the country, it is difficult to determine what specific impact Model City funding had. Certainly Model Cities helped put RMDC on a sound financial basis and most of the projects began through Model Cities are still being operated by RMDC without City support.

The most innovative program administered through RMDC that probably would not have been possible without extensive Model City support is the Helena Indian Alliance. The Indian Alliance continues to provide Helena's Indians (less than 3% of the total population but our only clearly identifiable minority group) with a means of coordinating social services, providing low interest loans, and most importantly providing a focal point to give Helena's Indians a sense of identity and unity. Almost three times as much Model Cities money was spent on this project as on any other social service project.

Other social service projects begun by Model Cities have not fared as well: the Teen Home, Consumer Credit Counseling, Juvenile Defender, Way-Let (parolee after-care), all were discontinued because of lack of alternative financial resources. The most significant project that failed to find alternative financing was the Comprehensive Health Insurance Program. This innovative project established a Health Insurance Program for those who

had incomes that were above poverty or medicaid levels but could not afford private insurance. It was a very successful demonstration that clearly illustrated a viable means of providing a service that is essential and was not, at least in the Pilot program, in any way "abused" by the program recipients. It was not feasible, however, to provide such insurance on the local level only and represented an idea who's time had not come, and perhaps still hasn't based on the continued indecision on the federal level over a National Health Insurance program. The Comprehensive Alocholism program is another illustration of a program that provided a valuable service but could not be sustained without Model Cities input. These projects are the best illustration of Model Cities financing of imaginative programs without any long range financing potential. In the last two years of the Model Cities Program, the City limited projects to those that clearly had alternative funding available.

Education is a social service area that was not identified as having a high priority on the basis of need in any of the Model City surveys. Nonetheless, more than half a million dollars was spent on eight projects administered by the School District. The best explanation for this is that the School District effectively organized its efforts through the citizen participation process and convinced council members that there was in fact a need for these services and clearly explained specific projects that would meet these needs. The projects were wlll handled and with the exception of a specially funded position for a minority counselor, the School District has continued their Model Cities projects though typically at a reduced level of funding.

Social service, health, and educational projects represented 29% of all Model City funding. These were the areas of greatest innovation, but also represented projects with the highest mortality and/or failure rate. These are the areas where citizen review and individual agency input became most critical in deciding the fate of individual project proposals. These are also the projects that required the most monitoring and evaluation because for the most part they were not administered directly by the City but contracted to other operating agencies.

Under the Community Development regulations it has become increasingly difficult to finance any social service type activity but the precedent set by Model Cities involvement in social service programs has made it extremely difficult to determine where the City has responsibility or even authority to be involved in the delivery of social services. HUD has concluded that it's role is to provide financing for essentially physical development activities that benefit low and moderate income people and not to be involved in the continued financing of social services. This distinction, clear as it may be to HUD, has been difficult and some instances impossible to explain to the general public that is seeking financing for a worthwhile social service project, and particularly to operating agencies that have become accustomed to having the City provide the local matching funds for services financed by other federal agencies. The City of Helena has tried to clarify the issue of the City's involvement in social service activities by limiting our involvement to projects that the City administers directly. For example, youth recreation programs primarily for low and

moderate income youth were begun as Model Cities projects and now have been integrated into our regular recreation program. The City has also identified physical improvements that support normal City functions as the primary area of our responsibility.

Model Cities raised the conscienceness level of Helena residents insofar as the need for social service is concerned, but the City of Helena will probably be playing a limited role in the financing and administration of social service programs in the future.

PART IV. ADMINISTRATION/EVALUATION

The administration of the Model Cities Program actually went through four phases. In the first phase, the Model Cities Program was administered by a director who resigned his position as Mayor to become the Director of Model Cities Program. In this phase Model Cities was floundering in its attempts to find the direction that it wanted to go. It was concerned primarily with setting up an organizational structure and hiring staff. The national guidelines provided by HUD indicated the types of positions that needed to be filled. Organizing the citizens participation structure and trying to get project ideas initiated was the major thrust in that first year. It was a time in which virtually any project was considered eligible under Model Cities and projects were funded primarily on the basis of those that seemed to have the best back-up and organization to support their particular programs. In the early stages those included the Rocky Mountain Development Council (the CAP agency) and the School District which submitted particular educational projects they could not afford in the regular school system budget. Also this was the era of initial startup of the City's Urban Renewal Program and a good deal of time was spent in trying to differentiate in the minds of the citizenry the differences between Model Cities and Urban Renewal. It can safetly be said that such a differentiation was never made clear.

In the second phase, the director of the Rocky Mountain Development Council who also had written the original Model Cities application became

the director of the program. During the three significant and highly successful years of her direction the program which had previously been floundering gained real direction and emphasis. Active coordination was developed between Model Cities and the individual operating agencies that ran programs, staff responsibilities were defined and Model Cities became a true operating part of the City of Helena's administration.

In the third phase, Model Cities and Urban Renewal were combined into a joint Community Development Department under the administration of a Community Development Director, who was also the assistant City Manager. At this point Model Cities was already being phased out and the Community Development Department was used as a means of coordinating the completion of Model Cities activities.

In its fourth and final phase, both Model Cities and Urban Renewal were scheduled to be closed out and as part of this effort the Community Development Department as such was dismantled and individual projects were assigned to appropriate operating departments. As an example, parks and recreation programs which had been coordinated by the local Development Coordinator under Model Cities were handed over to the Parks and Recreation Department. Model Cities water and sewer projects were turned over to the Public Services Department, and so on. This final phase was the result of a new City Manager coming to the City of Helena and revamping the City's overall administrative operation. During the period of activity of Model Cities and Urban Renewal there was a distinct separation between the "old line" City of Helena staff and new programs that were administered by Model Cities and Urban Renewal. As a result of Model Cites and Urban Renewal the City of Helena's overall budget in a sense of expendible funds

was effectively doubled. Consequently the area of responsibility in which the City of Helena operated was greatly expanded but this created a real sense of separation between the "old line" and the "new line" City of Helena staff. The separation was in fact a physical separation in that Model Cities and Urban Renewal offices were in a building separate and apart from the rest of the City's administration. Although the City still has the same physical separation of operating out of two buildings the various programs of Model Cities and Urban Renewal have been integrated into the overall City administration structure and although both buildings are still in use the separation that existed two years ago in the minds of City of Helena employees and the public has been eliminated.

In terms of the long range effect of the administration of the Model Cities Program two things are clear. First of all, the City of Helena attracted under Model Cities and Urban Renewal professional level staff that had never existed in city government before. Most of the top level administrators that still are employed by the City of Helena came in during the Model Cities era and today remain an integral part of the City's administrative structure. The second important part that was played by Model Cities administration concerned the Model Cities information and evaluation process. The Information and Evaluation system was a prerequisite for receiving Model Cities funding and was handled as a means of meeting the federal requirements for evaluating the success of individual project proposals. Within three years of the inception of Model Cities, however, the value of the evaluation process was seen as being important not only to Model Cities projects but all ongoing programs in the City of Helena. Since 1974 the City of Helena has integrated the Model Cities Information and

Evaluation system into the City's office of Budget and Evaluation which is responsible for the preparation of theCity Budget and evaluating City projects. This procedure has also become an integral part of the City's administration of the Community Development Program and will continue to be used in the City of Helena for the foreseeable future.

Perhaps one of the more surprising aspects of the administration of the Model Cities Program (which involved a total of 15% of the Model Cities operating budget) is the fact that Model Cities was phased out as simply and with as little as controversy as it was. It was always a concern that when Model Cities funding ran out that the City would find itself with severe staff problem because we would not be able to continue to fund the positions. But the Model Cities Director began in the third year of the Model Cities Program to slowly phase out employees as their primary responsibilities were completed and in terms of the overall administrative picture there were no real problems in closing down the separate operation of the Model Cities Program.

PART V. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Certainly one of the most interesting aspects of the Model Cities process was the involvement of the City of Helena citizenry in the actual planning of Model Cities expenditures and their active participation in the City of Helena's governmental process. Prior to the inception of Model Cities, Helena city government was in almost every respect overshadowed by the fact that the City of Helena is the capitol city and the State government, particularly the Governor, held that primary interest of city residents, and there was little perception of Helena as a separate city. The initial Model Cities survey indicated that few people knew who the City's mayor was and though some knew the name of the City Manager they were most unclear as to what his responsibilities were or what functions the city government in fact performed.

There was an old line citizenry that had lived in Helena for several generations whose families had come here in an era marked by an affluent society supported by the gold that had been discovered in the Helena area. At the turn of the century the City of Helena was known as the "Queen of the Rockies" and was the cultural and social center of the State. These influential citizens, over a period of the first 60 years of this century, had in effect informally handled the administration and the setting of priorities for city government. If Model Cities did one significant thing it was to change the people's perception of city government and their role within it.

The actual citizen participation structure of the Model Cities Program went through several stages but initially involved dividing the town into three separate neighborhoods (excluding the upper income areas), electing neighborhood councils from these neighborhoods that met separately, and then met together as a joint citizens council and reported to yet another group, the Model Cities Board of Directors, which involved neighborhood council representatives as well as other people appointed by the City Commission to represent a broad perspective of community interests. That process was finally modified in the last two years of the Model Cities Program into a joint Citizens Advisory Council where the members were elected from three different neighborhoods including the entire city at neighborhood meetings held annually. Seven members were elected from each of the three neighborhoods with an additional seven members appointed by the City Commission to balance the representation and make up a joint council of 28 members. That is the citizen participation structure under which the City of Helena currently operates and provides the citizen input for not only the Community Development Program but also for the overall budgetary review process. The CAC also has several committees that include non-CAC members interested in particular program areas: Parks and Recreation committee, Community Development committee, Public Safety committee, Public Service committee, and Administrative committee.

The citizen participation structure is about to be revised again. At the June 1976 primary election the voters of the City of Helena adopted a self-government charter which retains the Commission-Manager form of government but includes as a part of the official governmental structure

a neighborhood councils which expands the neighborhood representation from three neighborhoods to seven. Under the new Charter, four City Commissioners and the City Mayor are to be elected at large by all the electors of the City, and electors within each of the individual seven neighborhoods will also elect four people to represent their neighborhood and they will be elected at the same time the City's general election is held for the City Commission. These elections will be held in the spring of 1977 and it is difficult to say now what effect these changes will have on citizen participation in Helena; increasing the number of neighborhoods will perhaps improve the representativeness of the individual councils, but it will also narrow their perspective and interest.

In evaluating the long term effect of citizen participation in the City of Helena four points seem significant:

1. The City in fact has an ongoing citizen participation structure which is and will continue to be the primary means of providing citizen input into the City of Helena's governmental process. Other Community Development cities have found it extremely difficult to develop and initiate an effective citizen participation structure. Our existing structure has made it easier to get our Community Development Program underway with genuine citizen input.
2. The City of Helena's citizen participation structure has in fact changed the ways which decisions are made within the City of Helena and has created a previously unheard of forum for low and

moderate income people and minority groups to have their views represented.

3. Although low and moderate income people are in fact represented in the citizen review process, in many respects, particularly Model Cities in its early days, gave low and moderate income people an unrealistic and ultimately unrealized view of what the governmental structure could in fact do for them. Those low and moderate income people who participated themselves in the citizen participation process for the first time were themselves greatly benefitted by being involved, and many found new jobs through Model Cities, however, they were able to do little to effect social change that directly benefitted the low and moderate income people that they tried most sincerely to represent.

4. It is still unclear and perhaps it never can be clear whether or not the citizen participation process effectively represents the citizenry of Helena. Those who directly participate are able to represent viewpoints which they themselves hold and which are reflective typically of groups and organizations in which they are active. However, it still seems doubtful, that they are able to understand or represent areas of towns or broad based areas of interest that exist within the community any more effectively than those who are the elected members of the City Commission. Certainly the CAC meetings that are held and the discussions that result, air issues that might otherwise not be brought before the public. But whether or not citizen participation creates better, more well

thought out, or more representative decisions, than exist without the citizen participation process, is still an open question. The City of Helena has found that no single citizen organizational structure can be relied on to effectively represent the citizen interests, instead the City has tried to use the CAC together with other advisory and administrative boards to create a broad basis for citizen input.

SUB-SECTION II. FUTURE DISPOSITION OF THE MODEL CITIES PROGRAM

As explained previously, Model Cities ended with the completion of the five year program and in fact, in its fifth year, Model Cities as a department of city government had already been eliminated and instead in its fifth and final year the Model Cities projects were integrated into the community development process and administered by individual operating departments of the City of Helena.

The features of the Model Cities Program which will continue as a part of our Community Development Program and other local activities involves primarily the planning and evaluation process which was begun under Model Cities. As explained previously, the Information and Evaluation system of Model Cities has now been integrated into the Budget and Evaluation Department of the City of Helena.

A particularly important lesson learned under Model Cities was that operating agencies who are responsible for the direct administration of projects can not themselves effectively or fairly evaluate the results of their individual programs. Therefore, continuing under Community Development as well as the City's other operating departments, ongoing evaluation of the success and failures of individual projects will be handled independently by the Budget and Evaluation Office which is responsible for the evaluation of the Community Development Program as well as the City's other administrative functions. The Budget and Evaluation Department sees to it that Community Development projects are assigned to operating

departments and that applicable federal and state laws are followed in the administration of the program.

The other feature the Model Cities program which will be maintained as a permanent part of the City's administrative structure is the citizen participation process. The seven neighborhood councils have been integrated as a permanent part of city government. There could be no more definitive statement of the importance that is placed upon the citizen participation process than its formal integration into the newly adopted City of Helena Charter.

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